Battling the Nine-Headed Monster

Monkey Series 19

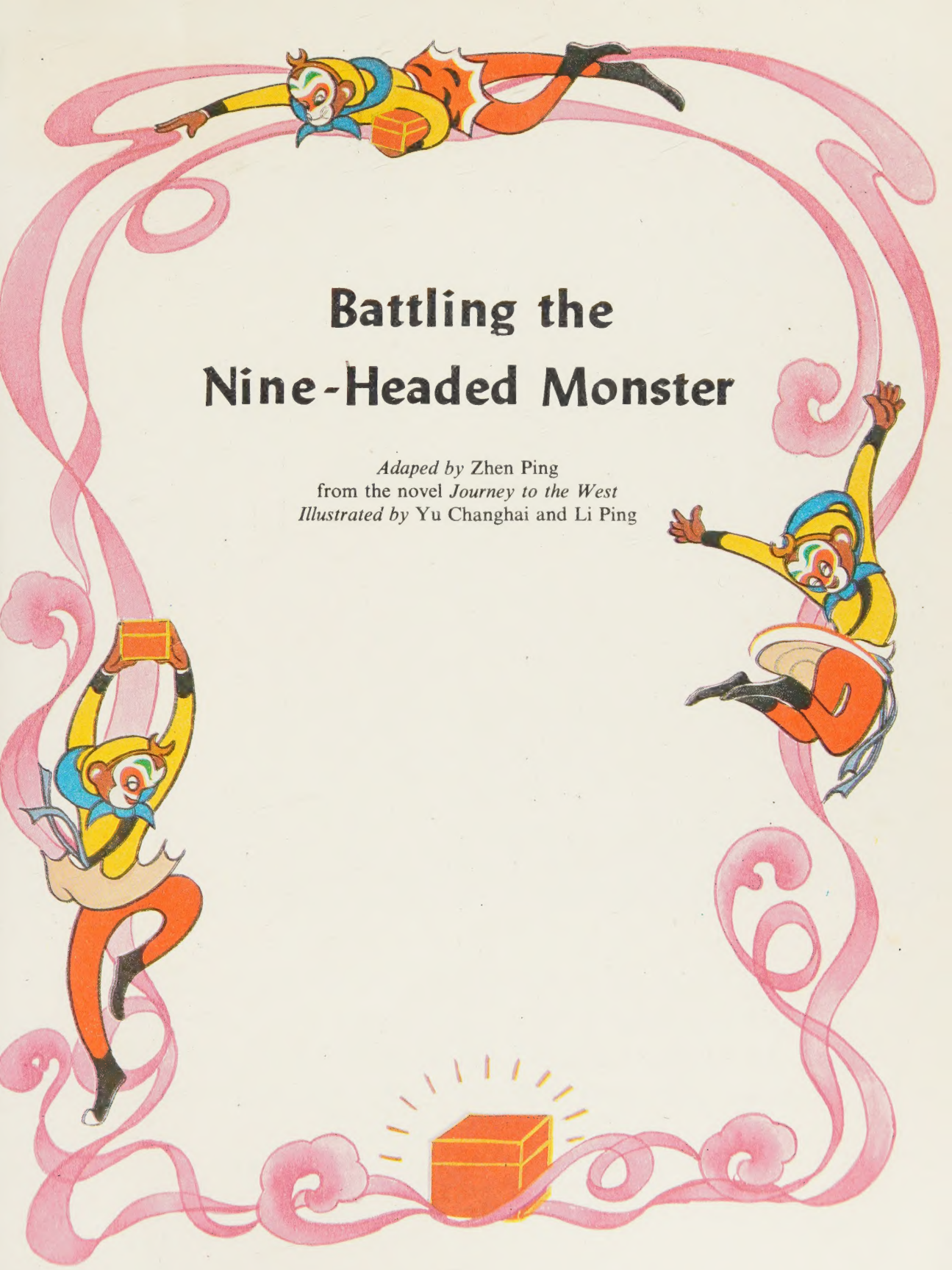
Battling the Nine-Headed Monster

This is the nineteenth in a series of thirty-four picture books telling the story of Monkey, adapted from the ancient Chinese fantasy novel *Journey to the West*. The previous book told of Monkey's three encounters with Raksasi and her husband, the Bull Demon King, in trying to borrow the magic plantain fan to subdue the flames of the Fiery Mountains. With the help of a host of spirits Monkey overcame them and led his master and fellow disciples over the Fiery Mountains.

Battling the Nine-Headed Monster, with sixty-two colour illustrations, tells about the recovery of the Buddhist treasure from Golden Light Monastery. When the treasure is stolen, the king has all the monks arrested. Monkey, however, finds out that a nine-headed monster is the culprit and, after a fierce fight, gets back the treasure, avenging the monks.

The next book in the series:

The next book in the series tells how Monkey defeats a demon king and saves his master and fellow disciples. When the Tang Priest and his party arrive at Lesser Thunder Monastery, the Tang Priest, Pig and Friar Sand are captured by the demon king and Monkey is caught inside a pair of cymbals. Monkey manages to escape, but he is caught again in the demon king's pouch. Escaping again, he fights with the demon, but the magic pouch is too powerful for him. Finally the Laughing Monk catches the demon, who turns out to be his yellow-browed page.



Battling the Nine-Headed Monster

Adaped by Zhen Ping
from the novel *Journey to the West*
Illustrated by Yu Changhai and Li Ping

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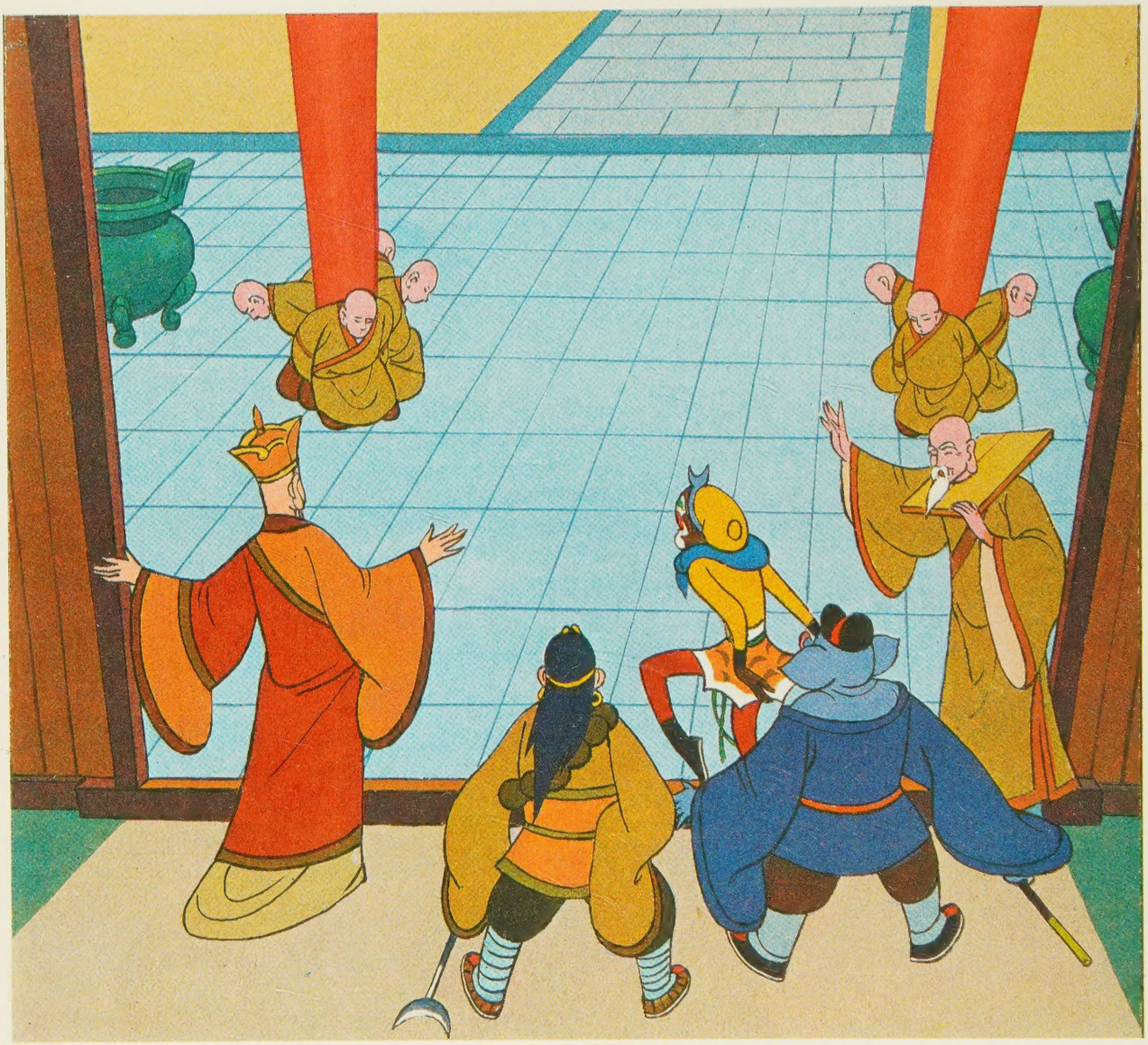
After the Tang Priest and his disciples crossed the Fiery Mountains, they continued on their journey to the West. One day while they were walking the Tang Priest reined in his horse and asked, "Monkey, what sort of place is that in the forest?" Monkey took a look and saw it was a city.

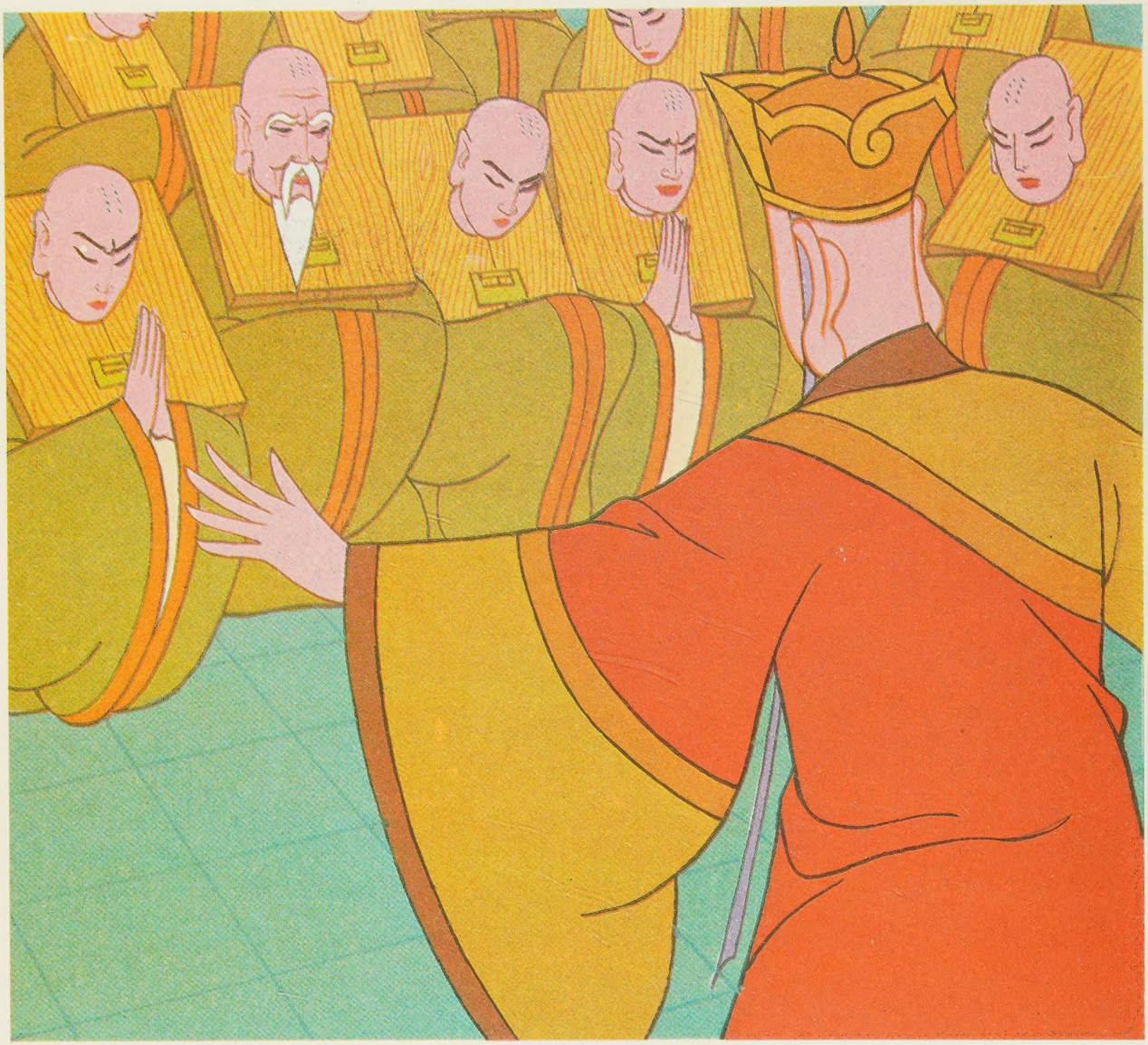
When they walked into the city, they saw Buddhist monks in chains and cangues, heavy wooden yokes locked round their necks, begging from door to door. It was very sad indeed.

The Tang Priest took pity on these monks and sent Monkey to ask them what their crime was. The monks, falling to their knees, replied, "We are from Golden Light Monastery and we have been wronged. If my lords want to know more, please come to our monastery, where we can tell you our woes."



The Tang Priest and his disciples followed them to the monastery. When they went inside, they saw all the incense had turned to cold ash and seven young monks were locked to pillars. It was more than the Tang Priest could bear.

He asked the monks what injustice they had suffered. One of the monks said, "This country is called Jisai. Three years ago at midnight it rained blood, and that very night the Buddhist treasure of the golden pagoda of Golden Light Monastery disappeared. The king thought the monks had stolen it, so he had all us monks arrested."



All the monks knelt down and pleaded, "We implore your great mercy. Save our lives!" The Tang Priest nodded and said, "Will you get me some brooms. I shall go up to sweep the pagoda and find out what has contaminated it. I should like to see the king tomorrow to present our passport, report in person and rescue you all from this misery."

As soon as the monks heard this, they were overjoyed. They asked the Tang Priest to cut through the iron locks holding the young monks so that they could prepare some food and tea for them. Monkey then used lock-opening magic and with one touch the locks all fell open. After that Monkey opened the cangues and chains around their necks.

When the Tang Priest and his disciples had eaten, the Tang Priest took a broom and wanted to climb the pagoda. "The pagoda was contaminated by the rain of blood," Monkey said. "There may be evil things living up there. If you go up by yourself this cold and windy night, I'm worried that something might go wrong. Why don't I go with you?" "Very good idea," the Tang Priest replied.

Both the Tang Priest and Monkey climbed up the pagoda, sweeping story by story. When they had finished the tenth floor, the Tang Priest, exhausted, said, "Sweep the last three floors for me, Monkey."

As Monkey was sweeping the twelfth story he heard voices from the roof. "That's odd," he thought, "very odd indeed. It's the third watch now; there can't be people talking up there as late as this. I'm sure it's evil spirits. Let's have a look."

Monkey stepped on a cloud to get a better look. Sitting in the middle of the thirteenth story were two evil spirits with a dish of food, a bowl, and a jug of wine. They were playing the finger-guessing game and drinking.

Monkey rushed up and shouted, "So you're the ones who stole the pagoda's treasure, you monsters!" The devils were flustered and began crying. All they could do was repeat, "Spare us! Spare us!"

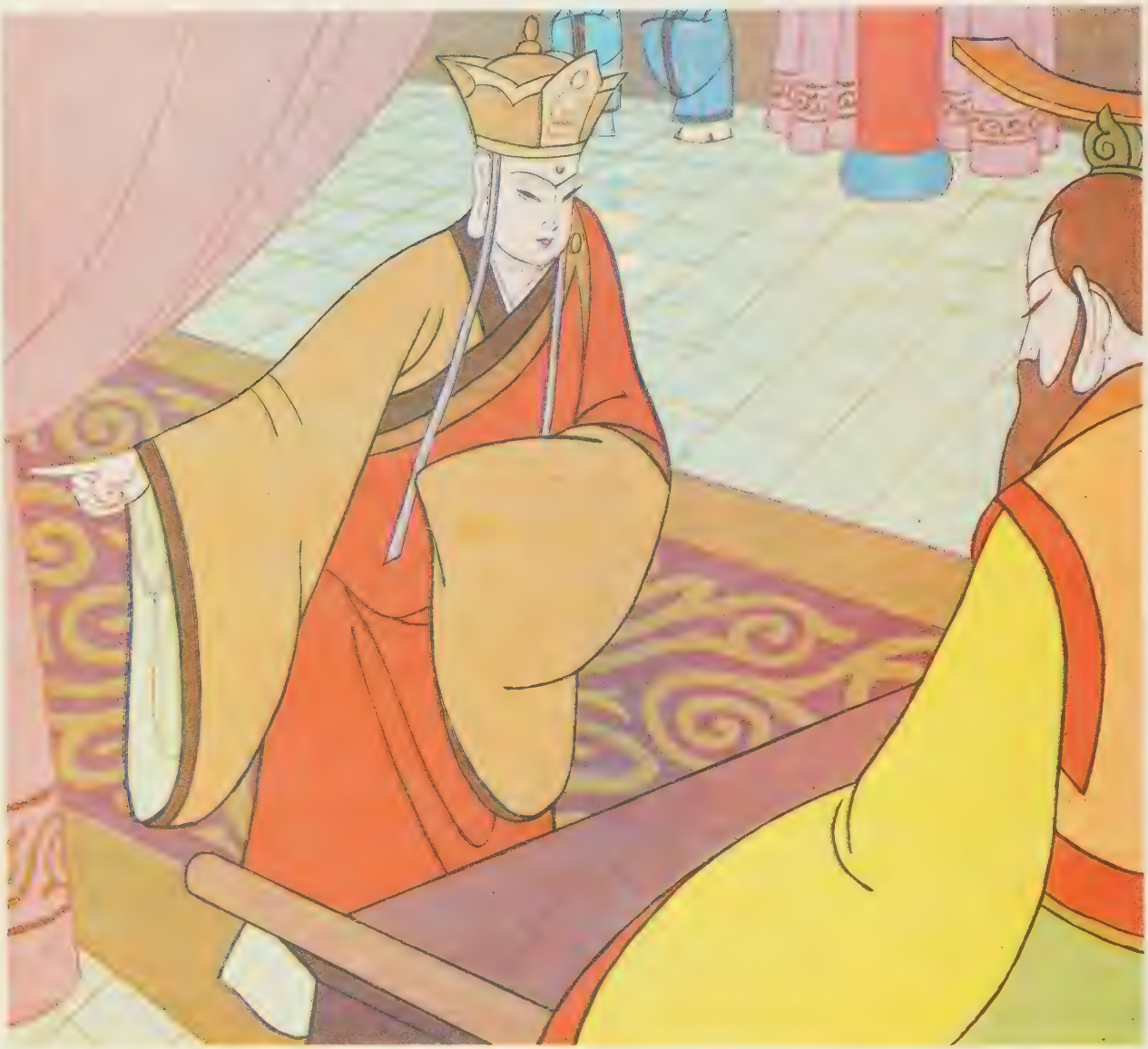
Monkey took the two demons to his master. The Tang Priest asked them, "Where did you put the stolen treasure?" The demons, shivering, replied, "The pagoda's treasure was stolen by the dragon king's nine-headed son-in-law and it is now in the dragon king's Green Wave Pool. We were sent here to keep guard."

By that time Pig and Friar Sand had reached the pagoda. When they found two devils had been captured, they said, "They're evil spirits and they've already confessed, let's kill them." "No," said Monkey. "Keep them alive so that they can tell it all to the king and lead us to get the treasure back."

The Tang Priest ordered that the two devils be taken down stairs and locked up. This news spread to every corner of the monastery, so monks, old and young, came eagerly to see the demons.

The next day the Tang Priest and Monkey went to see the king. When they arrived in front of the palace, the Tang Priest bowed to the king and said, "I am a priest sent by the Great Tang to worship the Buddha and fetch the true scriptures. As my route lies across your distinguished country, please check my passport and allow me to proceed."

When the king had read the passport through, he said, "The monk from the Great Tang is not afraid of a long journey to worship the Buddha and fetch the scriptures, but all the monks in our country want to do is to steal. They are totally different."



The Tang Priest said, "It's not true. Yesterday I entered the city and saw a dozen or so monks in cangues. When I asked them why, they told me they were the victims of injustice. That is why I went to the pagoda to make an investigation." After that the Tang Priest told the king what had happened the night before.

The king ordered royal guards to be sent at once to Golden Light Monastery to fetch the thieving devils so that he could interrogate them. The Tang Priest said, "The devils are crafty. I think it would be best if my disciple went first to arrest them."

The king then ordered his aides to have a sedan chair and yellow canopy prepared. The aides carried Monkey with escorts in front and behind who shouted to clear the way to Golden Light Monastery. Everyone came out to see the holy monk.

When they reached Golden Light Monastery, Monkey ordered Pig and Friar Sand to each handle one devil. Monkey got back into the sedan chair, heading for the royal court.

The two devils were taken to the steps of the throne hall. They confessed that the dragon king and his son-in-law had made it rain blood three years ago, then they had stolen the treasure. The king ordered that all the monks of Golden Light Monastery be released from their cangues.

The king then had a banquet prepared to congratulate the holy monks. The king asked, "Which of you holy monks will lead the force to capture the monsters and get back the treasure? How many men and horses will you need?" Pig could not restrain himself from shouting, "We won't need any soldiers. My brother and I can go and catch them right now."

The king raised a huge goblet and drank a toast to their journey. Monkey and Pig, each grasping a demon, rode a cloud, and used carrying magic to take them off to the southeast. In no time they reached Green Wave Pool.

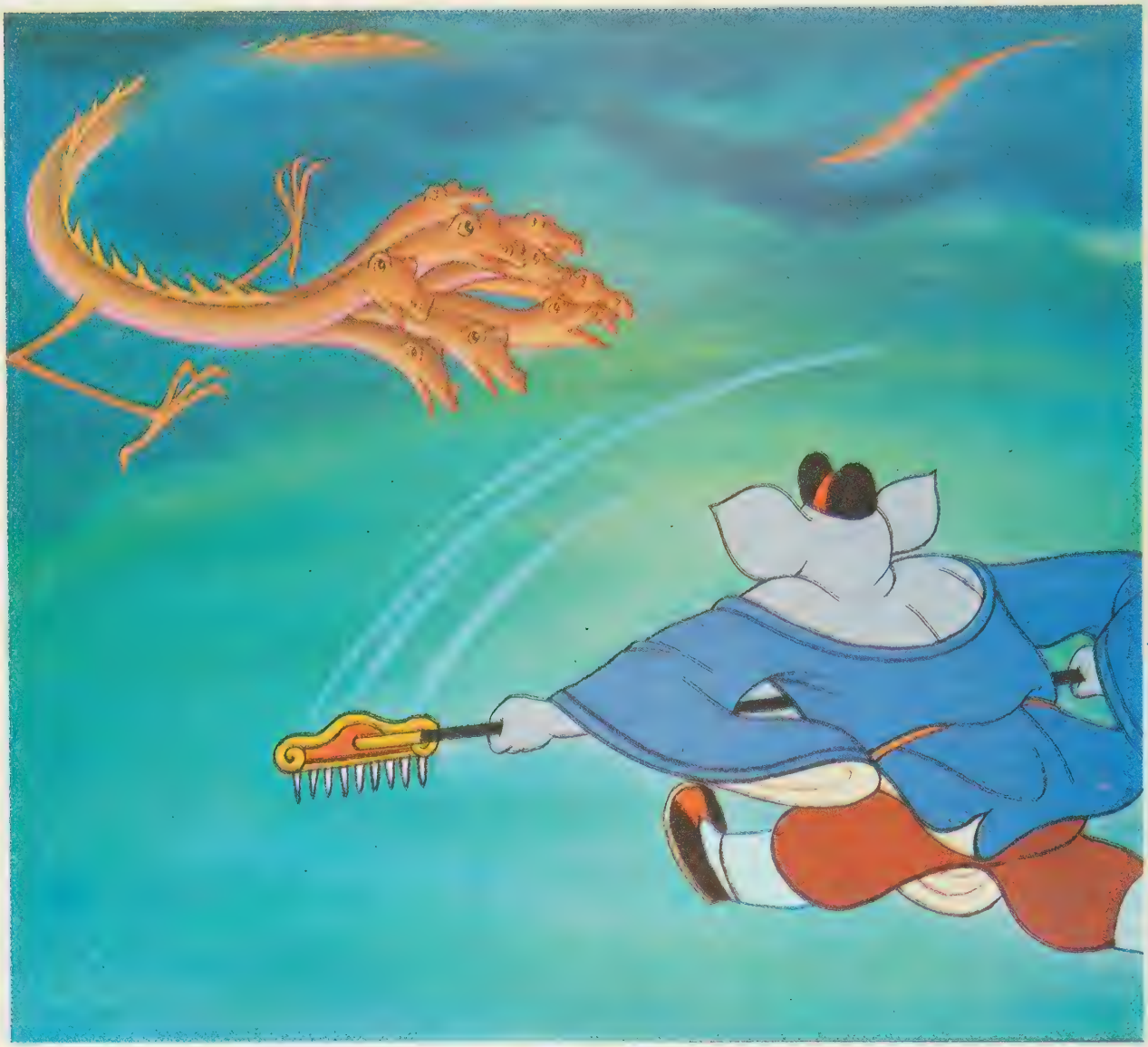
Monkey ordered the two demons, "Tell the dragon king that the Great Sage Equalling Heaven is here. If he wants me to spare him and his family, he'd better hand over the treasure from the pagoda of Golden Light Monastery at once." He and Pig then threw the two demons into the water.

The two little devils told the dragon king about their encounters. The news gave the ancient dragon such a fright that his soul left his body. "Son-in-law," he said, "the Great Sage Equalling Heaven has come. What shall we do?"

"Relax, Father-in-law," the prince replied. "I've been studying martial arts since childhood. There's nothing to be scared of. After three rounds with me I guarantee the wretch will surrender with his head hanging."

At this the nine-headed son-in-law jumped out of the pool. Standing on a cloud, he demanded battle. Monkey replied, "From your ugly appearance you must be that nine-headed prince. If you return the treasure you stole from the pagoda, I'll spare your life."

The prince flared up and said, "So what if I stole their treasure? It's none of your business. In my view you don't want to live anymore, so come here and taste my crescent-bladed halberd." Monkey wielded his cudgel to block him. A fine battle ensued.



Pig, admiring the beauty of their fight, raised his rake and brought it down on the evil spirit from behind. The prince leapt into the sky in his true form as a nine-headed monster, rushing towards Pig.

The sight alarmed Pig, who said, "Brother, I've never seen anything so ugly in all my days." Monkey replied, "Never! I'm going up to kill him." Monkey then leapt on his cloud into midair, where he struck at the monster's head with his cudgel.

The monster swooped down, then turned with a roar, shot out a head, grabbed Pig and dragged him to the pool.

The nine-headed monster pulled Pig into the palace, where fish spirits tied him up. The dragon king was delighted and ordered a celebration banquet.

Seeing Pig being dragged away by the nine-headed monster, Monkey was worried about him. He turned himself into a crab and plunged into the dragon king's palace. He found Pig tied to a column and said to him, "Can you recognize me, Pig?" Pig knew it was Monkey from his voice and said, "Save me, Brother! Save me!" Looking all around to make sure nobody was there, Monkey cut through the ropes with his pincers.

Having unlashed Pig, Monkey told him to wait under the archway, then he climbed up to the main hall and, making himself invisible, sneaked Pig's rake out of the palace.

Pig, now reunited with his rake, said to Monkey, "I'm going to attack that palace. If I lose, wait on the bank to rescue me."

After Monkey left, Pig charged in with a great cry that sent all the demons rushing into the palace and shouting, "Disaster! The long-snouted monk is charging back in."

The ancient dragon king and the nine-headed monster were caught off guard. All they could do was jump to their feet and look for cover.

When the nine-headed monster had hidden his princess, he rushed out, shouting, "Swine! How dare you terrorize my family?" Pig retorted, "It's you who brought me here. Give the treasure back at once. Otherwise every last member of your family will be killed." The demon was in no mood for kindness and started fighting Pig.

The dragon king led his dragon sons and grandsons to attack Pig with their spears and swords. Seeing that things were going badly for him, Pig feinted and fled.

All the demons ran in pursuit, surfacing out of the pool. Monkey, who had been waiting on the bank, smashed the dragon king to pulp. His sons and grandsons all fled in terror, while the nine-headed prince took the body back to the underwater palace.

Pig said to Monkey, "That demon has gone back and won't come out again. Besides, it's getting late now. What shall we do?" Monkey replied, "Get back down there and attack again. You must get the treasure and draw him out. I'll kill him."

As the two were talking they heard a mighty wind roar. It was the God Erlang with the Six Brothers of Plum Hill. They were travelling on the wind and clouds, carrying falcons and hounds.

Pig shot up on his cloud to stop Erlang. "True Lord," he shouted, "could you slow down for a moment? The Great Sage Equalling Heaven would like to see you." "Where is the Great Sage Equalling Heaven?" Erlang asked. "Awaiting your summons on the mountain," Pig replied.

All the gods, led by Pig, went to the mountain. Monkey approached to pay his respects to them. He told Erlang how the dragon king and his nine-headed son-in-law had stolen the treasure and fought both Pig and himself.

Since it was already late at night, they decided to fight the demons the next morning. Monkey, Pig and Erlang had a feast set out. They then drank under the light of the moon and the stars.

Soon the east started to become bright. Pig said, "It's getting light. I'm going down to challenge them to battle." "Be careful, Marshal." said Erlang. "Just lure him out for us to deal with." Grabbing his rake, Pig made water-dividing magic and jumped in.

Pig went straight to the dragon palace, where he saw the dragon's widow, sons and other demons weeping over the dragon king's body.

Pig went in, roaring abuse at them. He landed a terrible blow from his rake on a dragon son's head, making nine holes. The dragon's widow fled in terror with the rest of them, crying out.

Hearing that Pig had rushed into the palace, the prince led the dragon grandsons out to fight, wielding his crescent-bladed halberd. Pig raised his rake to parry the blows and fought in retreat until he jumped out of the water.

Monkey and the gods had been waiting on the bank a long time. As soon as they saw the prince and dragon grandsons emerging from the water, they all leapt into the fray, thrusting furiously with sword and spear. All the dragon grandsons fled in terror in all directions.

Seeing that things were going badly, the prince turned into his original form, spread his wings, and started circling around. Erlang pursued him closely. The monster shot out a head to bite Erlang. Erlang's heavenly dog leapt up and bit off the head.

The monster fled for his life in great pain. Pig wanted to go after him, but Monkey stopped him. He said, "I'm going to turn myself into the prince, meet the princess and trick the treasure out of her." And Monkey jumped into the water, followed by Pig in noisy pursuit.

They soon reached the dragon palace, where Monkey turned himself into the prince's double. When he saw the princess, he told her, "That Pig is terrible and he is after me. Hide the treasure somewhere safe."

Not realizing in her alarm that he was an impostor, the princess fetched a casket and gave it to Monkey, saying, "This is the Buddha relic; hide the treasure where it will be safe. I'll go to fight that long-snouted monk." The princess left, carrying a sword in each hand.

Monkey tucked the treasure into his clothes, rubbed his face, and turned back into himself. "Take a good look, Princess," he said. "Am I really your husband?" As the princess made a desperate grab for the box Pig ran up and knocked her to the floor.

Seeing the princess down, the dragon's widow started to flee, but Pig grabbed her and raised his rake to smash her. "Stop!" said Monkey. "Don't kill her! Keep her alive for when we go back to announce our victory at court."

Having wiped out the thieving devils, Monkey and Pig went back up to the bank with the treasure. When Erlang and other gods saw that Monkey and Pig had succeeded, they left.

The liberated monks of Golden Light Monastery were waiting outside the city. When they saw Monkey carrying the box and Pig dragging the dragon king's widow back to the city, they kowtowed.

The king and the Tang Priest were sitting in the main hall of the palace. The moment they heard that Monkey and Pig were back with the treasure, they hurried down from the hall to welcome them. The king and all his court praised them greatly.

Monkey put the treasure back in the pagoda. The pagoda shone anew with colourful light and an auspicious glow that could be seen in all directions and admired by all around.

Monkey ordered the dragon wife to look after the pagoda forever. The pagoda had its light again and the Tang Priest and his disciples were satisfied. When they were leaving, the king and his subjects burned incense, served wine and accompanied them out of the city. The monks of Golden Light Monastery found it particularly hard to part from the Tang Priest and his disciples.

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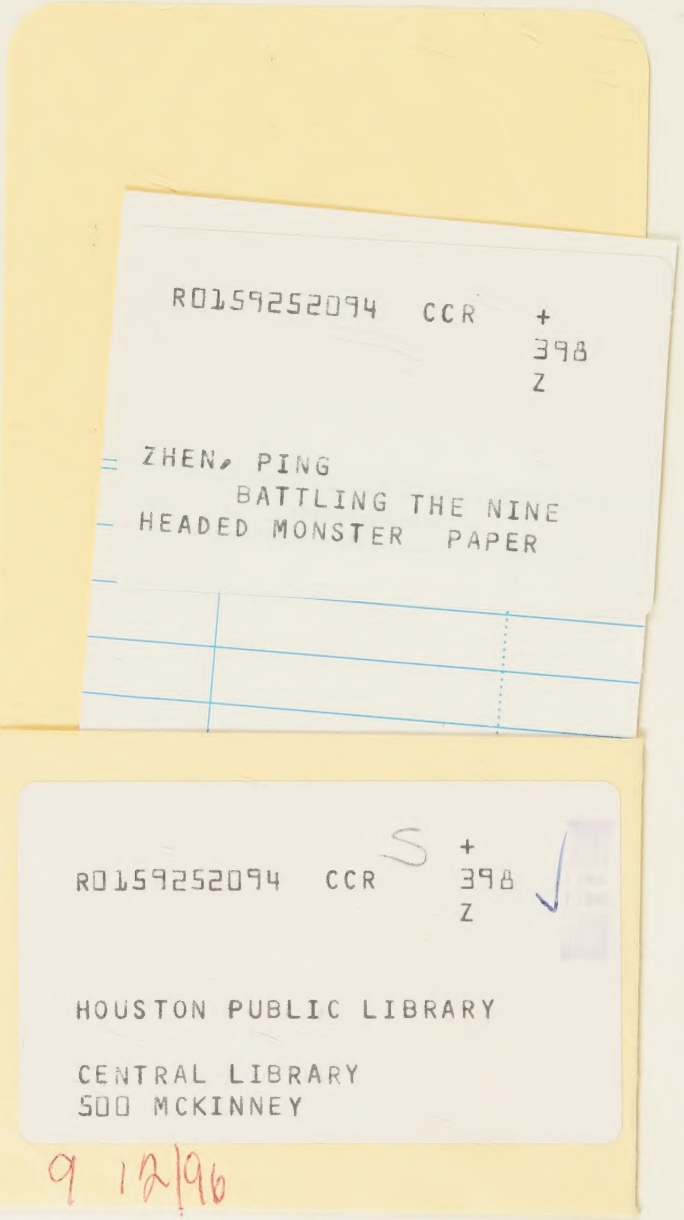
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6. Friar Sand Joins the Pilgrims
7. Stealing the Magic Fruit
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The *MONKEY SERIES* of picture books is based on the ancient Chinese fantasy novel *Journey to the West*, a tale rich in episodes about demons and monsters trying to stop the Tang Priest Xuanzang from reaching Thunder Monastery in India to fetch the Buddhist scriptures. The real hero of this novel, beloved by Chinese readers for four hundred years, is the resourceful, brave and humorous Monkey.

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